

# Arts degrees not useless, study says

By **ANDREW SUNSTRUM**

TORONTO (CUP) -- A new national study calling for increased funding to university arts programs debunks the myth that humanities and social science graduates are not competitive, observers say.

Authored by Robert Allen and commissioned by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Council of Canada, the study released last week warns of the economic consequences of failing to increase funding of university liberal-arts programs.

Allen, an economics professor at the University of British Columbia, argues it's time to put the misconception to rest that liberal-arts students are useless.

"My report showed that the profitability of investing in engineering and sciences is no greater than when you invest in social sciences and humanities," said Allen, whose conclusions are based on data generated by a series of Statistics Canada micro surveys.

The economic spin-offs derived from investment in social sciences even outweigh the societal perks produced by heavily funding engineering, math and the physical sciences, he argues.

According to a cost-benefit analysis on the return rate to society, social sciences accounted for 10.2 per cent of returns, while engineering accounted for 7.9 per cent and math and the physical sciences contributed 7.4 per cent.

So society and government's disproportionate emphasis on technical programs is misguided, says Allen, who calls for increased funding to liberal arts in his report.

"The rapidly changing economy will require people to manage it and to think of creative solutions to new problems," he said. "Perhaps these solutions will require imagination beyond the technological."

The social sciences and humanities fields of knowledge include history, literature, phi-

losophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, fine arts, native, religious, environmental and women's studies as well as economics, business and administrative studies, ethics, education, and law.

Pamela Wiggins, director of communication with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, says she hopes the study will bury stereotypes about social studies.

"Essentially there's

been a lot of anecdotal information that social science grads will be driving taxis and flipping burgers which did not mesh with what we thought, so we wanted to find out factually what was the case," said Wiggins.

"We were pleasantly surprised with the results of the study."

The Canadian Federation of Students said the report gives the group ammunition against a new provincial pro-

gram in Ontario that promises an unlimited amount of funding to universities that can double their enrolment in computer science, computer engineering and electrical engineering programs by 2000.

The Access to Opportunities Program will award universities with both start-up grants of \$10,000 per student as well as ongoing operational grants from \$3,500 to \$5,000 for the technology-based scholars.

"We want to stop the cult of technology," said Mike Conlon, chair of the federation's national graduate council. "We're disappointed with the obsession of the provincial government. Clearly, [Allen's] report shows that it is a short-sighted way to maintain a strong economy."

In the same report, Allen argued tuition is a double tax on students who eventually pay for their education through income tax.

## York launches new public services degree

By **TARA C. BRAUTIGAM**

TORONTO (CUP) -- York University has landed Canada's first university degree program for public servants.

The Bachelor of Arts in Public Service Studies, a program designed for emergency service workers, was announced last week. Classes are set to begin in January.

"This indeed is a significant event in the history of the college," said Livy Visano, dean of York's Atkinson college, which will house the program.

She added the degree -- which will include the study of law and justice issues, governmental structures, organizational behaviour, the immigrant experience in Canada and finances -- will balance the more technical education that public service workers receive.

Visano, a former parole officer, says the program was established because public security organizations expressed a need for education into issues related to public services, including race relations and administrative studies.

York developed the program in consultation after more than a year of consultation with public service and security workers.

Potential students for the three-year program include people working in courts or in

police, ambulance, immigration, probation or correctional services, and those from private security companies. It's designed for adult part-time students so that professionals can work and study simultaneously.

"There's a really broad interest in the program," says humanities Prof. Leslie Sanders, who will help coordinate the degree.

She adds graduates will be better leaders, especially in communities demoralized by economic hardship or urban decay.

Law-enforcement and fire officials say they're pleased the degree is being offered.

Don Crocker, the fire chief for the town of Moore, Ont., says it will benefit future firefighters.

"I think it's really exciting to have a course on stream . . . for emergency services," he said. "It will certainly help us out immensely."

Peel Region Police Chief Noel Catney says the new program will be especially helpful in light of the growing trend to integrate fire, police and public health services.

"I think when historians look back, they're going to say that this really is a unique time in the public service sector," he said.

Catney says that for Peel police force, Canada's fifth-

largest police organization, the program is especially important. He plans to promote it to

new recruits within the department.

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